

Traveling Players Winter '22
Hecuba Audition Sides

WELCOME! We're so excited for you to audition! We can't wait to meet you – or see you again!

WHAT HAPPENS AT AUDITIONS?

We know that actors can shine in different ways, so we organize our auditions to allow actors with different strengths to shine. You will read a few scenes, play improvisation games, and participate in ensemble building activities. The audition is an opportunity for the director to get to know you and to see how you work and play with other potential members of the ensemble. It is also an opportunity for you to get to know your potential castmates. You will have your best audition if you relax, have fun, and connect with your fellow performers! We have been told that our auditions are significantly more fun than the average audition. We plan to keep it that way.

THE SIDES:

- Familiarize yourself with the scenes below and their source mythologies to prepare.
- These scenes **do not need to be memorized**.
- You'll read these scenes as part of your audition with Jeanne Harrison and Ryan Fields.
- Some helpful guidelines as you prepare:
 - Do I understand all the words? Have I looked up any words or phrases I don't understand?
 - Do I understand why these characters say each line? Will it be clear to my audience?
 - Am I speaking loudly and clearly enough so my audience can understand me?
 - How can I engage my whole body in the performance? (This doesn't necessarily mean moving your whole body.) Are my physical gestures connected to my character?

If there are any questions, please don't hesitate to ask...you can reach us at 703-987-1712 or you can email us at info@travelingplayers.org.

ON AUDITION DAY:

Eat before you come to the Studio. Please dress in clothes that will allow you to comfortably move, and bring a water bottle.

You could very likely learn new skills and make new friends! Relax and have fun -- you're going to do great!

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SIDE 1: POLYDORUS

GHOST

You see Polydorus,
Son of Queen Hecuba, son of Priam.
From folds of the Underworld I come,
From gates of Night where Hades rules,
In exile from the gods.
I was a child, too young to shoulder arms
Or wear a sword. My father's city, Troy,
Was threatened by Greek might.
He sent me, in secret,
Here to Thrace, to an old ally,
Polymestor, who rules these farms,
These fields. These people breed horses.
Polymestor rules, their spear-lord.
So here I came, and with me
My father smuggled gold: if Troy fell,
His sons would still not starve.
So far, so good. Troy's towers survived.
My brother, Hector, kept his city safe.
I grew up here
In Thrace, at Polymestor's court,
Grew like a sapling - doomed.
Greeks snatch the life of Troy,
Snatch Hector's life, storm the palace,
Slaughter Priam my father
At his own altar.
Blood; butchery; Achilles' son.
News reaches Thrace.
My father's good old friend
Kills me for the gold, to keep the gold,
And dumps my carcass.

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SIDE 2: CHORUS

CHORUS Hecuba, we hurried here.
Slaves, war-booty,
Agamemnon's share
Of spear-spoiled Troy,
From our master's tents
We hurried here, to tell you.
No good news. More pain.
We must tell you pain.

The Greeks, in full assembly,
It's decided: your daughter must die
To appease Achilles.
They were hoisting sail,
Ropes taut; his ghost appeared
In golden armour above his grave,
Crying 'Greeks!
Where are you going?
Will you leave my grave unhonoured?'
At once, among the spearmen,
A wave, a storm of argument.
'Sacrifice'. 'No sacrifice'.

Agamemnon took your side,
Hot for Cassandra,
The mad one, your daughter.
Against him, Theseus' sons,
Princes of Athens,
Gave different arguments
But the same advice:
Crown Achilles' grave
With fresh young blood.
'Achilles' fame' they said, 'Outranks
The pleasures of Cassandra's bed.'
Tense argument, word tug-of-war.

Then Odysseus stepped up,
Subtly Odysseus.
Crowd-charmer. Honey-tongue.
They fawned on him;
They drank his words.
'Will you spurn

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The bravest of all the Greeks
To save a slave?
When our dead face Persephone,
There in the Underworld,
Must they look her in the eye and say
their comrades ignored them,
Did them no honour
As they slipped from Troy?
Let me go, now. I'll fetch her.
The mother's old: trembling hands.
I'll snatch that child.'

Go to the temple, the altar,
Pray to gods above, below.
Only prayers can stop this,
Stop them tearing your child away,
Stop you watching
As she slumps on the grave,
Gold necklace purpling with blood
On white young throat.

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SIDE 3: HECUBA

HECUBA Then aren't you ashamed
Of these plans of yours?
I treated you... as you say I treated you -
And how do you treat us?
With harm, with harm!
Loathsome you are, you politicians,
Toadies for applause!
You betray your friends
To gratify the mob.
What makes this so clever -
Child-sacrifice, human sacrifice -
Why do they think so?
Have they no cattle to grace this grave?
Achilles came, demanding life for life -
Then why pick her?
What harm has she done him?
Helen:
He could have marked her for sacrifice:
She brought him to Troy,
Brought him to death.
You want to butcher a prisoner.
Fine. Pick her:
Helen of Sparta,
The prettiest, the guiltiest.

So much for justice. As for gratitude -
You knelt to me,
You touched my hand, my cheek,
You begged me. I do the same to you.
Give back to me
The kindness I did you then.
Leave me my child. Don't kill her.
Enough have died.

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SIDE 4: ODYSSEUS

ODYSSEUS Hecuba, be told.
You're angry. Don't make enemies
Of those who give you good advice.
You saved my life;
I'm happy to save yours.
I give my word.
But I repeat what I said before,
To the Greeks in council.
Troy is taken; Achilles,
Noblest of Greeks,
Demands your daughter's life;
He must have it.
It happens often, too often,
That we honour heroes, warlords,
No more than ordinary men.
Achilles died, for Greece,
As bravely as any man can die.
He's earned our honour. Earned it.
Are we to smile, make friends,
When a man's alive,
And ignore him once he's dead?
Disgraceful!
Imagine another war, another call-up.
Who'd go to fight,
Who'd not sit safe at home, if he saw
How little honour we paid our dead?
Take me: alive, I ask for little,
Just enough. But when I'm dead, I want
An honoured grave, a high-heaped tomb
For all to see. Those honours last.

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SIDE 5: POLYXENA

POLYXENA Do you flinch, my lord?
Do you turn away?
Don't worry. I won't beg.
I won't embarrass you.
I'll go with you. I'll die. I must.
I want it:
Only a coward would struggle now.
What use is life to me?
My father was king of kings.
That was my life. I was a princess,
Brought up for glittering royal marriage.
Kings fought for my hand,
To make me queen.
Look at me! Once every woman in Troy,
Old, young, looked up to me.
I was a god to them,
Except that gods don't die.
Now I'm a slave. A 'slave'.
I can't bear that. I'd rather die.
Who'll buy me, pay money for me -
A job lot, perhaps,
'Hector's sister and miscellaneous'? -
Some disciplinarian,
Wanting his money's worth,
Who'll put me to bread-making,
Weaving, sweeping floors,
Sharing my bed
With some bought-in male
Who'll paddle and paw
What princes fought for?
No. Die, rather.
Choose to die. Give myself to death.
Take me away, lord.

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SIDE 6: POLYXENA/ HECUBA

POLYXENA Hush, mother. Sir, be patient.
She's losing her child. Be patient.
Mother, give way. They're stronger.
They'll knock you down;
They'll drag you, hustle you -
Is that what you want?
An old woman, shamed and bruised -
By boys? No. Accept. Be dignified.
Mother. Darling. Hold me. Kiss me.
I'll never see the Sun again -
So big, so bright.
Only darkness now.
No more words, mother.
Mummy. Goodbye.

HECUBA For you, child, pity.
For me, tears, pain.

POLYXENA I'll be far away,
In the Underworld, at peace.

HECUBA Oee, moee.
What can I do? How can I die?

POLYXENA A princess - I die a slave.

HECUBA I live, a slave. I see the Sun, a slave.

POLYXENA No husband. No marriage.

HECUBA All my children, gone.

POLYXENA What shall I tell them, Hector, Priam?

HECUBA Tell them my misery, my tears.

POLYXENA Dear breasts that gave me life.

HECUBA My darling, snatched by fate.

POLYXENA Farewell.
Tell Cassandra farewell from me.

HECUBA Others fare well.
How shall we fare well?

POLYXENA And Polydorus, my brother,
Here in Thrace.

HECUBA If he's alive. If fate has spared his life.

POLYXENA He lives. He'll close your eyes in death.

HECUBA I'm dead. I'm alive, and look: I'm dead.

POLYXENA Take me, lord. Veil me.
My tears, my mother's tears.
Light of day! Your name is all I have.
You're mine for a little moment more -
And then Achilles' grave, the knife.

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SIDE 7: CHORUS

CHORUS Winds, winds of the sea, [strophe]
Swift ships on racing sea,
Where will you take me, where?
Who'll won me? Who'll own these tears?
What harbour, where?
In the south?
There on the plains,
Where Apidanus, father of rivers,
Makes fertile fields?

An island home, perhaps? [antistrophe]
Is Delos to see my tears?
Delos, where palm and bay
Spread branches, made holy shade
When Leto bore
Apollo,
Artemis, twins,
Children of Zeus on high. Shall I dance,
Dance for them, dance?

In Athens? [strophe]
Shall I weave for Athene,
Bright colours, silk?
What patterns, then?
Mares, yoked to her chariot?
Titans, braving the gods,
Thunder, lightning,
Laid low by Father Zeus?

No children. [antistrophe]
No father now, no country.
Smoke, ruin, slaves.
In a foreign land,
Strangers, they'll call me slave.
Torn from the land I love,
A slave, a slave,
No better than the Dead.

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SIDE 8: TALTHYBIUS

TALTHYBIUS

Lady, I wept before,
When I watched her die.
Now you ask me to tell it,
I'll weep again.
There, gathered at the graveside,
The whole Greek army,
To watch the sacrifice.
I was close by.
Achilles' son took Polyxena's hand,
Led her on to the mound, left her.
A detachment of men, hand-picked,
In case the victim struggled. Achilles' son
Took a golden cup, lifted it,
Poured an offering to his father.
Signed to me
To call for silence. Up I stepped.
'Greeks! Be quiet! Be calm! Be still!'
No sound. The whole crowd - still.
He said, 'Achilles, father,
Accept this offering,
Come up from the Underworld.
Dark blood, virgin blood,
Drink it, its yours,
Our gift to you, from me,
From every Greek.
Smile on us. Watch us, and smile on us,
As we hoist our anchors
And sail for home.
Grant us safe journey. Home!

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SIDE 9: ATTENDANT/HECUBA

(Enter HECUBA.)

ATTENDANT Majesty. How can I speak your pain?
You're alive, you see the Sun,
But what else is left for you?
Your city, your husband, children, gone.

HECUBA Old wounds. You tell us nothing new.
Polyxena's body:
Who told you to bring it here?
The Greeks were to bury her -
Or so they said.

ATTENDANT Poor lady, she doesn't know.
She weeps for Polyxena.
She hasn't heard.

HECUBA Oee. What is it? Cassandra dead,
The mad one? Is it her you bring?

ATTENDANT She's alive, lady.
Save your tears for him.
It's a man we bring.
I'll uncover his face.
You never expected this.

HECUBA Oee moee.
Polydorus. My son, dead.
He was safe with that Thracian.
Fate crushes me. I'm dead.

(Music.)

Polydorus,
Aee aee, I knew this,
Weep, oh weep.

(Music ends.)

ATTENDANT You knew your son was dead?
HECUBA I didn't believe it.

(Music.)

Now I see, I see.
O misery, tears on tears,
Is no day free of pain?

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SIDE 10: HECUBA/POLYMESTOR

HECUBA Polymestor, I can't look you in the face.
I'm ashamed. I flounder in misery.
You knew me before; you see me now;
I can't look at you. Don't blame me.
Not just you, Polymestor. Any man.
From men, women veil their eyes.

POLYMESTOR Quite right. But you sent for me.
'Come at once,' you said. What is it?

HECUBA Something private,
For your ears only,
Yours and your sons'.
Have the guards withdraw.

POLYMESTOR *(to GUARDS)*
Leave us. We're safe.
There's no one here.
(to HECUBA, as they go)
No quarrel with the Greeks,
And none with you.
Now, tell me. If a man's blessed by fate
He should help unluckier friends.
I'm yours.

HECUBA First, tell me: my son, Polydorus,
The child I sent you, his father sent you.
Is he alive? No other question first.

POLYMESTOR He's fine. Don't worry.

HECUBA You speak like the friend you are.

POLYMESTOR What other questions? Ask.

HECUBA Does he speak of me? Remember me?

POLYMESTOR He wants to come to you, here, in secret.

HECUBA And the gold he brought from Troy?
It's safe?

POLYMESTOR Safe in my palace. Guarded.

HECUBA Look after it. Beware of greed.

POLYMESTOR My dear, I have what I have.
I'm satisfied.

HECUBA So. What I have to say,
To you and your sons -

POLYMESTOR I'm waiting to here.

HECUBA It's a secret.
You're such a trusted friend -

POLYMESTOR You can tell us: myself, my sons.
Ancestral gold. Priam's. Hidden.

POLYMESTOR I'm to tell your son?

HECUBA Who else can I trust?

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POLYMESTOR These children. Do they need to hear?
HECUBA In case you die. They'd need to know.
POLYMESTOR I hadn't thought of that.
HECUBA In Troy, where Athene's temple stood -
POLYMESTOR It's there, the gold? Is there a marker?
HECUBA A black rock jutting from the ground.
POLYMESTOR I'll remember. Something else?
HECUBA I want you to have the things I brought.
POLYMESTOR What things?
Are you carrying them? Inside?
HECUBA Inside, with all the other plunder. Safe.
POLYMESTOR Safe? Here?
The Greek ships' loading-point?
HECUBA The tents of the female prisoners
Are out of bounds.
POLYMESTOR And safe? No guards inside? No men?
HECUBA No Greeks. Just women. Just us.
Come inside. The Greeks are panting
To sail. They long for home.
As soon as you've got what's yours,
You and the boys,
You can go where you left my son.